REMARKS

Applicants have studied the Office Action dated June 13, 2003 and have made amendments to the claims. It is submitted that the application, as amended, is in condition for allowance. By virtue of this amendment, claims 1-19 are pending. Claims 1-5, 7, 9, 11, and 13 have been amended, and new claims 17-19 have been added. Reconsideration and allowance of the pending claims in view of the above amendments and the following remarks are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Walker et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,862,223). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The present invention is directed to systems and methods for associating search results based on the search results that were selected by users in response to previous searches. One preferred embodiment of the present invention provides a method for associating search results. According to the method, a first list of search results is provided to a first user in response to a first query, and each of the search results from the first list that is selected by the first user is recorded. A second query that is the same as or similar to the first query is received from a second user. There is provided to the second user an alternate list consisting of the search results that have been previously selected by at least one user in response to the first query and/or similar queries, as indicated by the recording of the search results that are selected. Because the second user is presented with the alternate list of those search results that were previously selected by other users in response to the same or a similar query, the second user can leverage the knowledge and evaluation time of the previous users that were searching for the same or similar information.

The Walker reference is directed to an expert matching system for managing communications between experts and users seeking solutions from the experts. However, Walker does not discloses a method for associating search results in which a first list of search results is provided to a first user in response to a first query, each of the search results from the

first list that is <u>selected by the first user is recorded,</u> and there is provided to a second user an alternate list consisting of <u>the search results that have been previously selected by at least one user in response to the first query and/or similar queries</u> as indicated by the recording of the search results that are selected, as is recited in amended claim 1.

Similarly, Walker does not discloses a method for associating search results in which original lists of search results are provided to users in response to queries, <u>each of the search results</u> from the original lists that is <u>selected by each of the users</u> in response to each of the queries <u>is recorded,</u> and there is provided an alternate list of search results that contains only <u>those search results that have been previously selected by at least one of the users in response to one query</u> as indicated by the recording of the search results from the original list that are selected by the users in response to the one query, as is recited in amended claim 5. Amended claims 9 and 13 contain similar recitations.

Walker discloses a commercial network system for providing users with solutions from experts based on user requests. More specifically, as shown in Figure 6, a user creates a request 600 and attaches search criteria 630, and these are combined into a user request 640 that is transmitted to a central controller 650. Then, as shown in Figure 7, the central controller stores the user request in a user request database 700 and searches the database for similar user requests 710. If there is a similar user request in the database 720, then the central controller offers the expert answer associated with the similar user request to the user 730. If no similar user request is found or if the user declines the offered expert answer, then the central controller continues processing the user request in order to find an expert that can provide an expert answer 760. Thus, Walker discloses an expert system for sharing expertise in which a user submits a request, a database is searched to ascertain if a similar request was previously submitted, and if so then the previous answer to the similar request is provided to the user.

In contrast, in preferred embodiments of the present invention, a user submitting a query is provided an alternate list consisting of the <u>search results that were previously selected by users</u> in response to the same or a similar query. In particular, original lists of search results are provided to users in response to queries, and <u>each of the search results</u> from the original lists <u>that is selected by the users</u> in response to each of the queries <u>is recorded.</u> When a user submits a

query that is the same as or similar to one of the previously-received queries, the user is provided an alternate list of search results that contains only those <u>search results that have been previously selected by users in response to the one query</u>, as indicated by the recording of the search results from the original list that are selected. The alternate list of previously selected search results allows the user to leverage the knowledge and evaluation time of the previous users that were searching for the same or similar information.

Walker does not teach or suggest a system in which a user submitting a query is provided an alternate list consisting of the <u>search results that were previously selected by users</u> in response to the same or a similar query. In the system of Walker, expert answers are stored in a database and associated with user requests. This database is searched when a new request is received to ascertain if a similar request has already been answered by an expert. This is done because if a similar request has already been answered by an expert, there may be no need to get an answer from another expert. If the database contains a similar previous request, then the previous answer is presented to the user. This teaches no more than storing a request result in a request database, and using the database to supply the request result if a similar request is later received. Thus, at best, Walker teaches storing (or caching) the results of queries and then providing the stored query result if a similar query is later received, instead of independently executing the query again to determine the query result. Nowhere does Walker teach or suggest recording answers selected by users from a list of answers, and providing another user with a list of the answers previously selected by the previous users.

In contrast, in preferred embodiments of the present invention, user selection of individual query (or search) results from a list of query results is recorded, and these recorded selections are used to provide an alternate list of only those search results that were previously selected by users in response to the same or a similar query. This is much different than simply storing (or caching) the query results found by a query and then providing the stored query result if a similar query is later received, instead of independently executing the query again to determine the query result. Embodiments of the present invention are not directed to such storing of the list of search results that is found when a query is executed. Embodiments of the present invention are directed to recording which search results are selected by users in response

to a query, and then in response to a similar query providing the search results that were previously selected by other users. Because the alternate list contains the previously selected search results, the user can leverage the knowledge and evaluation time of the previous users that were searching for the same or similar information.

Applicants believe that the differences between Walker and the present invention are clear in amended claims 1, 5, 9, and 13, which set forth various embodiments of the present invention. Therefore, claims 1, 5, 9, and 13 distinguish over the Walker reference, and the rejection of these claims under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) should be withdrawn.

As discussed above, amended claims 1, 5, 9, and 13 distinguish over the Walker reference, and thus, claims 2-4, claims 6-8, claims 10-12, and claims 14-16 (which depend from claims 1, 5, 9, and 13) also distinguish over the Walker reference. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claims 1-16 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) should be withdrawn.

Claims 17-19 have been added by this amendment, and are provided to further define the invention disclosed in the specification. Claims 17-19 are allowable for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claims 1-16.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the application and the claims are in condition for allowance. Reexamination and reconsideration of the application, as amended, are requested.

If for any reason the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at (561) 989-9811 should the Examiner believe a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

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